

LuAnne Kozma, 23837 West Leboist, Novi. I am with **Defense of Place**, an organization devoted solely to assuring that parks are protected in perpetuity. Earlier, I testified there was a need **for a layer or two of binding citizen oversight** so that it's absolutely certain that parkland *that citizens value* is not being sold for non-park uses. Thank you for adding in *some* of this needed oversight with the approval step by the Natural Resources Commission. I believe this will create a better process that hopefully will not lead to bad decisions on selling the bulk of the state's parks.

These bills also provide an opportunity for better protections for waterfront parcels in our state parks, in particular Great Lakes shoreline. Outside of the committee meetings, this was discussed but ultimately no provisions were made. Perhaps this was an oversight.

I also urged that **the public needs to be assured that all potential sales of parkland go through a fair process**. Senator Brown provided written testimony at the last committee meeting—that by implementing the protections of the bill, there would be: *“significant impediments to the DNR ever selling parkland...”* and that the legislation was modeled after states where the public *“demanded increased intervention by the state legislature over a state agency’s ability to sell valuable parkland.”* The whole point of these bills is for the Legislature to provide oversight on the DNR and its decisions to sell parks or parts of parks.

However, these bills accept, without reservation, all the DNR’s decisions on new park boundaries and by doing so, the Legislature would be in automatic agreement with the DNR’s decisions made only in 2004 on what state parkland it is considering to sell, and exempts them from the public process the bills create.

If this because the Legislature believes that these parcels are only small, insignificant parcels that no one considers parkland, that is not the case, and that is not the issue. The issue is that some of these DNR decisions are to sell large parcels of parkland that the public clearly has been demanding that the DNR continue as parks. The public has been ignored. And this legislation also ignores them.

Two park sales the DNR is executing right now involve over 500 acres of Proud Lake State Recreation Area being sold in two separate transactions, to a school district and to Commerce Township, and about 130 acres of Brighton State Recreation Area being sold to Genoa Township in Livingston County. In both cases, state parkland is being valued at residential rates as if on the open market. For Proud Lake, the DNR is suggesting to the Township that they may contact a developer to partially develop the parkland, and there is no stipulation that the land remain conserved in a protective easement. In Genoa Township, this is clearly what is being done. There have been no public hearings in the vicinity of the parks. Livingston and Oakland Counties have not gone through Phase 2 of the Land Consolidation Strategy yet. And the public has no idea, by reviewing the DNR website, that these deals are going down.

It is not the DNR’s mission to determine that local communities’ best use of state park lands would be to develop them into single-family residential. The DNR’s mission is still to preserve and protect the natural resources of the state—whether or not these resources lie within or without park boundaries the department has seen fit to redraw. Until they are sold, these resources still belong to the People of Michigan. Land that has been state parkland for decades obviously may still hold recreational value as parks, recreational and open space for local communities. The DNR needs to acknowledge that and if the DNR does not, these bills can assure that they do.

These park sales are already underway. The Legislature can *intervene* here and make sure that these park sales either don’t happen—or the parks are transferred at little to no cost to local governments so that they can afford to keep them as parks. **An amendment that requires that DNR parkland be valued at fair recreational value, and transferred with a deed restriction that guarantees its use for park and recreational use, is necessary.** Whether done in committee or on the floor, the Legislature has this opportunity to square itself with the public. Thank you.

Testimony provided by LuAnne Kozma, 238387 W. Leboist, Novi, MI 48375 to the Michigan state house subcommittee on “Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation” on May 30, 2006.

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